



SAIW and SAIW Certification

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Having spent the previous few years securing the SAIW's stability and financial sustainability, last year we started to focus on improving customer experience. This we have carried forward as a key focus for 2024 and I am very pleased to be able to share some results with you.

I am particularly pleased with the feedback received from our ISO 3834 clients in the 2023 survey. The SurveyMonkey® customer service experience index for ISO 3834 returned a net score of 95%, which is well into 'very positive' territory – the global benchmark for this level being 74%. In addition, 99% of our ISO 3834 clients declared that they were 'very satisfied' with the audits carried out by the SAIW, so we feel we are continuing to do very well on the company certification side.

Further supporting this view, the recent IIW Annual Congress and International Conference in Greece rated the SAIW second only to Italy in terms of the number of ISO 3834 certifications issued through the year, while the IIW's Certification auditor rated our Fabricator Certification scheme as the best run ISO 3834 system in the world.

This makes me very proud. All our certified fabrication companies in South Africa can take this as further evidence that our welding industry can be globally competitive with respect to weld quality.

A second area we surveyed was our Laboratory service, which we sent to everyone who has used this SAIW service. Customer satisfaction levels are also very good here and our customer base is continuing to grow.

The real reason for doing these surveys, though, is to find out how we can improve. In this regard we have had good feedback for our Level 1 and Level 2 Inspection Course programmes. We have long been aware of the need to improve our pass rates, particularly for these two Inspection courses. We have now made changes in response.

As a condition of entry to the Inspection course programme, we used to ask for a Matric pass certificate in either science or mathematics. But a pass requires only 30%, and we found that many students entering the Level 1 course could not handle the theoretical side of inspection and, with the heavy workload involved, would quickly fall behind.

Now, to have direct access to Level I courses, students must have a 50% pass in both mathematics and physical science. However, for those whose matric results are not high enough, we have introduced a new course called 'An Introduction to Inspection' which offers an alternative route.

This two week, ½ price course consists of a full week recapping the maths and science required for success, followed by a further week where students are introduced to the terminologies, processes and typical defects they will be dealing with during the follow-on courses. So, students with marginal matric results get an extra few weeks to come to grips with weld inspection before making the bigger investment in the full course. Also, through future discounts on the Level 1 course, this course becomes free for those who manage to pass and carry on.

In addition, since there is no great demand in South Africa for the IIW International Welding Inspection (IWI) diploma, we are looking at revising the syllabus to focus on meeting our local industry's needs. This will be taken to our SAIW Board for approval at its next meeting in August.

Furthermore, the IIW has agreed that, once a student has successfully completed both Level 1 and Level 2 exams, they may write the harmonised, multiple-choice IIW IWI Basic exam. Then, following two years of in-service experience, and some preparation courses that we will develop, they can write the IIW IWI Standard exam. With this combination of prior learning, experience and supplementary IIW examinations, the IIW International Inspector diploma will still be accessible to anyone who has successfully gone through the SAIW's Inspection Programme.

Thanks to all of you who responded to the surveys. They really do help us to continually adapt and improve.

John Tarboton